

# Infectious Hepatitis, 1953 and 1954

Infectious hepatitis was added in 1952 to the list of diseases to be reported weekly, but notification was known to be incomplete for that year. During the following 2 years reporting was much improved and was probably better in 1954 than in 1953.

A high incidence of the disease occurred during the late winter and early spring months of 1954. For the corresponding period in 1953, the chart shows a bimodal distribution which probably reflects reporting procedures rather than an actual seasonal trend. Although incompletely reported, the 1952 figures indicate a definite peak in February, as in 1954.

The incidence decreases during the summer months and may reach a low point sometime during the fall months. Sufficient data are not available at this time to establish the season of lowest incidence.

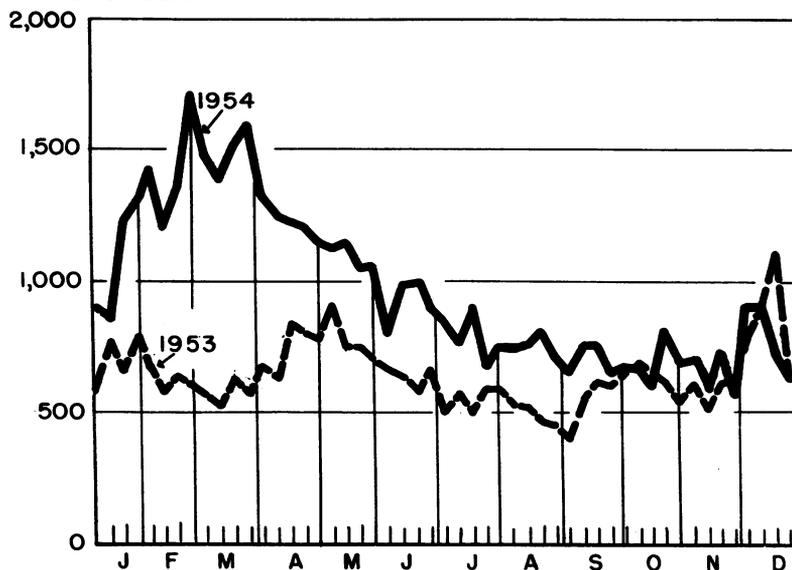
The provisional number of cases reported in 1954 is 49,739 compared with 33,382 for 1953. The large number of cases reported during these 2 years indicate that the disease is a major health problem. This is particularly true in certain areas of the United States. More than a third of the cases for both years were reported from the Middle Atlantic and South Atlantic States. A large number of cases were also reported in the West North Central States, especially during 1954.

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Number of cases



**Infectious hepatitis in the United States, by week: 1953 and 1954.**

During 1953 and 1954 approximately 60 reports of epidemiological investigations of outbreaks of infectious hepatitis were received by the Public Health Service. These reports accounted for less than 3,000 of the total cases reported.

Many cases were not considered associated with outbreaks, and reports of outbreaks were not received from many States. Some States probably did not report outbreaks because the cases usually occur over a period of several months as the incubation period of the disease is from 15 to 35 days.

The mode of spread for most of the outbreaks was given as personal contact. Food, milk, and water have been considered vehicles of infection, but in only four instances during 1953 and

1954 was water considered as a possible vehicle. Food and milk were not suspected as vehicles in any of the reported outbreaks, which occurred most often among institutional or school populations. In several instances the disease was associated with unsanitary living conditions and was among persons in the low socioeconomic group.

An unusual characteristic of the disease is the long period, 6 weeks to 2 months, of convalescence from the infection. No successful treatment has been found, and in some cases the infection leaves chronic liver damage. Gamma globulin has been used successfully for prophylaxis. It gives passive immunization and is effective if given to contacts during the early part of the incubation period.